LAMENT. V. 7.

Our Fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have born their Iniquities.

In this Book the Prophet Jeremiah, in a mournful Stile adapted to the Subject, the various and sore Calamities with which this [illegible] were successively purfued from the Death of [illegible] and the ruining both King and People. [illegible] Times of Trouble. And in this Chapter [illegible] himself before God in Prayer, with a most pitiful Complaint of all that [illegible] under Captivity and Barbarity, which they were treated, whose [illegible] their Yoke.

[illegible] that there was a Foreign Yoke, and but the Tyranny [illegible] Yoke. Complaint agrees [illegible] Circumstances to this Day's *Tragedy*, which could [illegible] Field of Blood, and perfect Image of Bondage [illegible] Par[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

cancels committed in those rebellious Times, [illegible] a great Part redrest'd, and Hope of its ancient Flourishes [illegible] give the hearty and loyal Expences, [illegible] Civil War. And many an ungodly Oppressor too is by this time [illegible] out of the Land, and his Seed, who inherited the Curse together with the Spoils, perhaps begging their Bread. But without doubt the Influences of those lewd Principles, that then prevail'd, dost still affect us; the Contagion of the ill Example works even at this distance: And the Effects of that dissolute Licentiousness, both in Opinion and Practice, which then made its Inroad upon us, are now both our Sin and our Punishment; and, if not timely prevented, may prove our final Ruine. In short, tho' the Nation has been long labouring under the Guilt of this Day, whether God hath as yet accomplish'd his Anger upon us for it, is more than any Mortal can determine; but to be sure, we have Provocations many and great to answer for besides, which without a speedy and unfeign'd Repentance are enough to sink us for ever.

But lest it should be thought, that I design to entertain you only with the most Tragical Aggravations of a Crime, (which I am verily persuaded needs none,) let us Consider how far we may be concern'd in this Text: For That, you cannot doubt, is deliver'd impartially.

Now the Text directly imports, that the Children may find the Iniquities of their Fathers, i. e. may be punish'd for, or by reason of those Iniquities which their Fathers have committed. That it happen'd so in the Instance now before us, is one part of the Prophet's Complaint: That it is to be expected when the Sins are of a heinous Nature, the Sanction of the Second Commandment may teach us: That it has been severely put in Execution, may be seen in the Posterity of *Solomon*, *Jeroboam*, *Ahab* and Others, (besides the Example of the Text) that stand recorded in Scripture: Nay that it is a kind of *Rul'd Case* in Providence, all History is Witness.

And certainly That which is so solemnly threatned by God, That which has been so often inflicted, That of which there are so many ancient Monuments, as well as modern Precedents, may be, and is likely to be drawn into Example again, whenever God sees fitting. And for our own particular, if we are not sensible enough that we have already *born the Iniquities of our Fathers* in the Fact of this Day, let us take heed that the Burden of 'em do not grow too grievous to be supported any longer.

That therefore we may all profit by the Doctrine of the Text, and not suffer any farther under the like Discipline, I shall

I. Endeavour to give a clear Account of the Equity of God's Providence in such kind of Proceedings.

II. I shall shew what is incumbent in point of Duty upon that People, or those Persons, who have Reason to apprehend the Case to be their own.

III. And *lastly*, I shall apply the Whole to our selves and the sorrowful Occasion of this present Assembly; by which, I am afraid, it will appear that the Case is too plainly *Ours*.

I. I shall endeavour to give a clear Account of the Justice and Equity of God's Providence in such kind of Proceedings; which may be sufficiently satisfied, as I take it, from these following Considerations.

...ful sufferings to which the Children of wicked ... are oftentimes no other in Reality than the natural ... Effects, or else the legal and just Consequences of their Fathers Sins.

For Instance, the unfortunate Son of a riotous Prodigal often inherits the Poverty and Rags, the Aches and Diseases, which are the curſed Fruits of his Father's Luxury and Lewdneſs. And this muſt frequently happen in the Natural Courſe of things, unleſs God ſhould always think fit to bleſs that Family with Barrenneſs, from whoſe Vices nothing but Misery can ordinarily be propagated.

Thus again, when unquiet and turbulent Spirits foment Diviſions in a Kingdom; and form thoſe Diviſions into ſettled Factions; and at laſt animate thoſe Factions into open Rebellion, their Children and their Grand-Children are neceſſarily involv'd in the common Calamity. Though better would it have been for the harmleſs Youth as yet unexperienc'd in Miſchief, and the tender Babe ſtill hanging at the Mothers Breaſts, never once to have ſeen the Sun, than to be brought thus upon the Stage of Diſorder and Confuſion; not to act any part themſelves, but only to ſuffer a Share in thoſe Misfortunes, of which their Fathers have been the pernicious Inſtruments. And yet this, as the State of the World is, muſt be their inevitable Fate. For Nations are made up of Young and Old, one with another: And 'tis impoſſible to ſever the little Innocents from their guilty Sires, without the Intervention of a Miracle, or the Deliverance of a ſudden Death, to take them from the Evil to come.

Beſides, in Caſes of this Nature, it is provided by Human Laws, and approv'd by the Wiſdom of Nations, that the Puniſhment of a Traitor ſhould be made more exemplary and terrible, by extending it in ſome degree to their Children. And therefore the Publick is not ſatisfied with the Death of the Offender alone; but his Eſtate is confiſcated, his Honour forfeited, his Blood tainted; and nothing but Reproach and Beggary devolv'd upon his unconſenting Heirs.

And this muſt be allow'd to be both Juſt and Prudent. It is Juſt, becauſe the Publick Weal has a reſerv'd Intereſt in all Mens Honours and Eſtates, antecedent and ſuperior to their private Right; of which they juſtly incur a Forfeiture, when they endeavour to ſubvert that Government which affords them Protection. It is Prudent, becauſe the Tenderneſs of parental Affection, and a regard to Poſterity, will ſometimes give Check to Men that are hardy and enterprizing, when no Conſideration of perſonal Danger to themſelves would be ſufficient to keep them within Bounds.

Thus far therefore there can be no Colour to impeach Providence of Injuſtice, barely for permitting the Children to ſuffer ſuch Evils, as are in truth but the natural and neceſſary Product of their Fathers Sins; or perhaps the Penalties that are both wiſely and juſtly allotted to them by Human Laws, and are found requiſite to the Support of Civil Government. I cannot ſee how the Juſtice of Providence ſhould be called in Queſtion on this Score; but I think, the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of it are both eminently ſeen, in reſtraining the exorbitant Luſts of Men, both by annexing Natural Puniſhments to ſome kind of Vices, and by ſubjecting them to ſuch Conſequences, (Legal as well as Natural) as are moſt likely to move the

the Bowels of Parents, and make them fearful of offending, if it be but for the sake of their Children.

If it be said, that the Providence which makes it fit to be observ'd and reverd, by *visiting the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children*, is not barely permissive, but judicial, and declar'd so to be in Scripture, it must be granted: But then, taking it in this View, it must also be own'd, that what is justifiable in our Earthly Governors, is much more so in God, who is the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of the Universe.

If therefore the Estate of a Rebel may be justly confiscated, and his Heir divested both of the Possession and the Right, by vertue of an human Law, what Claim can there be against the Decree of Heaven, whenever God sees fit to deprive the Children of those temporal Enjoyments, that have been forfeited by their Fathers Disobedience and Ingratitude; and of which he can take the Forfeiture, either in the present, or any succeeding Generation, as may best serve his wise and secret Purposes? For the further clearing of which, let it be consider'd,

Secondly, That the Punishment which is at any time transferr'd upon the Posterity of the wicked consists only in Temporal Evils, such as Losses and Crosses, Distresses and Diseases, Oppressions, Persecutions, Wars, and the like.

Now of all these kind of Evils, which are purely Temporal, it must be said at once, that they are not absolute Evils in themselves; nor are they strictly and simply the Punishments of Sin; but, to be sure, they do not amount to a full Retribution for it.

Absolute Evils they are not, because they are applicable to a very good End, and capable of a very good Effect; as manifestly serving to prove and exercise, to confirm, and perfect the sincere Christian; and to chastise and awaken, to humble and reform the Careless, but not yet desperate Sinner; and to be Examples of Admonition and Caution to All.

Nor are they, strictly speaking, the Punishment of Sin; they are rather of the Nature of Correctives, and Preservatives against it. For it is evident, in the common Course of things, that the Righteous do, and, without the help of a Miracle, must share them in some measure with the wicked. And when they are sent by God's special Direction, and employ'd upon his Errand, they are still the Instruments of Discipline rather than Vengeance, and savour more of the Compassion of a Father, than the Severity of a Judge. In short, they are intended as a Means of much Good to those that will make a right Use of 'em: And as they have a Medicinal Virtue in them, so they are apply'd with a tender and a very healing Hand.

How then can we presume to question God's Sovereign Right in *visiting the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children*, when the Evils with which he visits them on this Account are frequently the Lot of the Righteous, as well as the Wicked; and since, where-ever they fall, the Judgment is always temper'd with a sweet Mixture of Mercy? If they light upon such as are well-dispos'd, the Chastisement of their Fathers Sins will make them more watchful of their own Ways, more zealous in God's Service, and more Exemplary in all Virtue: If upon such as are wickedly bent, the Dread and Smart of God's Righteous Judgments may still rouze them, before they are given up to an uncorrigible Hardness of Heart; and bring them possibly at last by Terror to Repentance.

But however it may be, God is ſtill clear both when he judgeth and is judged. For when all is done, Temporal Judgments are by no means the adequate Puniſhment for Sin: For *the Wages of Sin is Death*, ſaith the Apoſtle; and as *the Gift of God is Eternal Life*, ſo is that Death Eternal which is awarded to Sin as its juſt Wages.

Rom. 6. 23.

There is therefore a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, in which all the preſent Difficulties will be clear'd up, and all ſeeming Diſproportions adjuſted in an open Theatre of Men and Angels: And if it ſhould appear at that great Day, that God, for the better Government of the World, and the more effectual Reſtraint of enormous Sinners, hath ſometimes vexed the Children of ſuch Men with ſore Adverſity, not ſo much for any great Demerit of their own, as for the crying Provocations of their Fathers; I ſay, ſhould it ſo appear, and the Sufferers the mean while, *hearing the Rod and who had appointed it*, ſhould be found to have amended or improv'd under the Viſitation of God's Hand, then will he the merciful Judge not only abſolve them, but beſtow an unmerited Reward upon them, infinitely out-weighing all that they might ſeem undeſervedly to ſuffer here below. And at this laſt and great Diſtribution of equal and impartial Juſtice, we may aſſuredly conclude that God will *render to every Man according to his Works*, i. e. his own proper Works: No Man ſhall then be puniſh'd for the Sins of another, but *the Soul that ſinneth*, that individual Soul *ſhall die*, becauſe the Award is final and the Death eternal.

Whoever therefore is ſpar'd, or whoever is puniſh'd in this World, there can be no want of Equity in ſuch God's Diſpenſations, as do ſo apparently abound in Mercy For as all Temporal Evils are convertible to Good, and, upon a right Uſe and Improvement of them, conducive to Mens future Happineſs; ſo the Damnation of Hell is reſerv'd only for harden'd and impenitent Sinners, who ſhall there bear their own Burden by themſelves for ever. And this, I conceive, might ſuffice to put an End to the whole Queſtion concerning the Juſtice of Providence in theſe Caſes. But yet it may be fit to be conſider'd,

Thirdly, That the Fact it ſelf that gives Riſe to the Queſtion, may eaſily be miſtaken. For it muſt not be ſuppos'd, as often as God avengeth himſelf upon the Children for the ſake of their Parents, that he therefore ſpares the Guilty, and puniſhes the Innocent in their ſtead. No! the guilty Parents are conſign'd over to the Day of Judgment, when they ſhall be ſure to pay all the Arrears of that Debt, which they owe to God's incenſed Juſtice. And the Children likewiſe, whether they tread in the ſame Steps with their Fathers or no, are ſtill no better than Sinners in God's purer Eyes: And Sins they have to anſwer for of their own proper Stock, more than enough to juſtifie any temporal Chaſtiſements that God can lay upon them; becauſe the ſevereſt of all temporal Chaſtiſements will always fall far ſhort of the Sinner's ſtrict and certain Due.

But doubtleſs, after all that has been ſaid, the moſt general and ſtanding Reaſon of ſuch God's Proceedings is, becauſe the towardly Children do too often imitate, if not out-do their Fathers Sins; or at leaſt, becauſe they ſilently approve the ſame by ſharing the unrighteous Gains, or other the unlawful Advantages thence ariſing: And thus whilſt they hug and hide the accurſed thing, they juſtly entitle themſelves to a Share in the Curſe that goes along with it.

Nothing

Nothing is more frequent, in common Observation, than for Vice to be hereditary in a Family; being either deriv'd from Constitution, or learnt from Example, or instill'd by Education. And 'tis too much the Care of wicked Parents to season their Children early with such Principles, and enter them well in such Practices, as they best like themselves. Thus the covetous Miser inculcates Thrift upon his Son betimes, and instructs him at any rate to make haste to be rich: So does the inveterate Republican principle his Son in Licentiousness, and initiate him in all the Mysteries of Rebellion: So also the Heretick in Religion fixes the wrong Biass at first upon the Minds of his Children, and delights to propagate his own perverse Errors. And when it is said in Scripture of *Nadab* the Son of *Jeroboam*, that he walked in the way of his Father, and of *Ahaziah* the Son of *Ahab*, that he walked in the way of his Father and his Mother, and so of many others; it is a Mark set upon them, that they had been too early led into such evil Courses, and too long accustom'd to them, to leave any great Hopes of a Reformation. Nor is the Propagation of Vice confin'd to single Families alone, but reaches to Neighbourhoods, and whole Communities; and when once it hath so spread it self, and taken a fast Rooting, it is continu'd down from one Generation to another, and grows in time to be the receiv'd Custom and confirm'd Law (as it were) of a Country.

In the mean while certain it is, that the longer Vice hath maintain'd its Succession in a Family, or a Country, the more provoking is their Offence, the more unpardonable their Rebellion against God. And as it well becomes the Righteous God to put a Stop to the Encrease of daring Impiety, by all proper Methods; so none can be more proper, none more just, than to visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children, when they are so apparently Heirs and Successors to their Fathers in Sin, and are daily heaping on fresh Aggravations. And when things are in this ill State, it seems to be the proper Season too, for God to interpose by some exemplary Act of Justice and Vengeance, that may be a sensible Warning to all Parents, not to give their Children so fatal a Legacy, not to leave them the Entail of so sure a Curse. And tho', when this happens to be the Case, the rebellious Children do deservedly suffer for their own Transgressions, yet are the Iniquities of their Fathers plac'd also to the Account, and make God's Judgments much the heavier. For the Scripture makes mention of a certain Measure of Iniquity, which when it is fill'd up, then is the Family or Nation, that is burden'd with so much Guilt, ripe for Ruin and Extirpation. And that Generation upon which the destroying Vengeance lights at last is said to bear the Punishment of all that went before: For so did all the righteous Blood, that was shed upon the Earth from *Abel* downwards to *Zechariah* the Son of *Barachias*, come upon that Generation of Men, who fill'd up the Measure of their Fathers by killing the *Prince of Life*: Which desperate Wickedness was remarkably punish'd by the final Destruction and Dissipation of the whole Polity and People of the *Jews*; and that the Sentence might be sure to extend to all the scatter'd Remains of their Posterity, it was fix'd upon them by that dreadful Imprecation of their cruel Forefathers, *His Blood be on us, and on our Children*, Matth. 27. 25.

And certainly the Providence of God needs no Justification in this Particular:

ticular: For he then moſt ſignally juſtifies himſelf and vindicates his own Honour, when he puniſhes thoſe Sins in the moſt exemplary and terrible manner, that have long exercis'd his Patience from one Generation to another, and could never be cured by any Method of Kindneſs.

And as 'tis highly fit as well as juſt, that the contumacious Children of ſuch ungodly Parents ſhould be made the publick Monuments of Divine Vengeance at laſt, ſo the Curſe of God does of Right belong to them alſo, who, tho' they do not accumulate Sin upon Sin, are ſtill Partakers in their Fathers Guilt, becauſe they cannot perſuade themſelves to part with the ſweet Gain thereunto annex'd, 'till they find it as the Gall of Aſps within their Bowels, and are forc'd to vomit it up again. Thus for the moſt part it fares with the unfortunate Heirs to ill-gotten Eſtates; which are obſerv'd to melt and waſte away inſenſibly, unaccountably, and rarely laſt to the fourth Generation. And it is moſt deſervedly their Fate: For if the Acquiſition was firſt made by Extortion, Perjury, or Sacrilege, the Detention is no leſs than an avowed Act of the ſame Injuſtice; and the Difference betwixt the Father and the Son in this Caſe (as 'tis briefly decided by the judicious Caſuiſt) is only that of the Thief and the Receiver. And therefore 'tis moſt righteouſly decreed by Providence, that he who is not willing to make a reaſonable Reſtitution to the Injur'd and Oppreſs'd, ſhould forfeit his unjuſt Poſſeſſions into the Hands of God, the ſupreme Diſpoſer of Mens Fortunes. And whenever this Decree is put in Execution, every one is able to diſcern the Cauſe, and ready to applaud the Juſtice of it, and ſay, in the Words of *Zophar*, *This is the Portion of a wicked Man from God, and the Heritage appointed unto him by God.*

Job 20. 29.

And I hope by this time I may have ſufficiently accounted for the Equity of God's Proceedings in all Caſes of this Nature. And, the Matter being thus rightly ſtated, there will no Difficulty remain in reconciling the Text with ſome other Paſſages of Scripture that may ſeem to thwart it. For when it is ſaid, *Ezek.* 18. 20. *The Soul that ſinneth, it ſhall die: The Son ſhall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither ſhall the Father bear the Iniquity of the Son; the Righteouſneſs of the Righteous ſhall be upon him, and the Wickedneſs of the Wicked ſhall be upon him*; this muſt not be underſtood in Oppoſition to the expreſs Sanction of the Second Commandment, back'd by ſo many Examples occurring in the Sacred Hiſtory. It cannot be thought indeed to ſtand oppos'd to unqueſtionable Fact; it only croſſes a confident Conceit of the *Jews* of that Time, who, under this Colour, were willing to lay the whole Load of Blame upon their Anceſtors, hoping themſelves to paſs only for innocent Sufferers on their Account. And to this purpoſe they apply'd that unmannerly Proverb then grown familiar among them, *The Fathers have eaten ſour Grapes, and the Children's Teeth are ſet on Edge*, ver. 2. But this being a fond Preſumption as well as groſs Hypocriſie, God checks their Confidence by giving them to underſtand, that Men generally (if not always in ſtrictneſs of ſpeaking) ſuffer for their own perſonal Guilt; that generally ſpeaking too, (tho' not always) the juſt Son of a wicked Father *ſhall not die for the Iniquity of his Father, but ſhall ſurely live*; that therefore when the Children are viſited for the Sins of their Fathers, the ſpecial Reaſon may well be ſuppos'd to be, that they alſo are guilty of the ſame Sins, or perhaps

of others no less heinous in the Sight of God: Which, if these arrogant People could have been so impartial to themselves, they must have seen to be their own Case.

But if we take the Punishment of another World into this Account, (as 'tis reasonable we should) that will untie the Knot all at once. For by what Rule soever God may dispence his Temporal Judgments, which may be variously suited to the Ends and Uses of his Providential Government, this is infallibly sure, that no Man shall suffer finally, no Man shall undergo Eternal Punishment but for his own strict Demerit. In that Respect, *the Soul that sinneth, it* alone *shall die*: And every Sinner shall bear his own Burden.

II. And now it is high time to hasten to the Second thing propos'd, *viz.* To shew what may be incumbent in Point of Duty upon that People, or those Persons, who have Reason to apprehend the Case of the Text to be their own.

And this will be dispatch'd in a few Words. For there is but one general Remedy for Sin, (whether National or Personal) and all the mischievous Consequences thereof, and that is a deep and unfeigned Repentance, manifested by a perpetual Abhorrence of that which is Evil, and a firm Adherence to that which is good for the time to come. And when the Guilt of any great Wickedness hath visibly descended from Father to Son, when it has been growing and encreasing from one Generation to another, when the Tokens of God's Wrath have already been upon a Rebellious and Stiff-necked People, or his Judgments seem still to be hovering over them, then, then is the Time to repent in good Earnest, lest they be deliver'd up to the Hardness of an impenitent Heart, and justly doom'd to perish in the Iniquity of their Fathers.

And that all they who may happen to be concern'd, may deal faithfully with themselves, whenever any such Judgment threatens, or Fear alarms them, it will behove them to enter into the strictest Scrutiny with their own Souls, and examine themselves thoroughly, whether they have not danc'd to the same Tune that their Fathers pip'd; whether they do not cherish the same evil Principles in their Hearts, or follow the same evil Practices in their Lives; whether they do not openly Applaud, or at least secretly Approve them; or if nothing else, whether they do not industriously cover them, and are content without Scruple to profit by them. For tho' they should be able to clear themselves in every other Particular, yet if they can't acquit themselves of this last Article, they are certainly sharers in the Guilt as well as the Gain: Because, as was before observ'd, the Oppression or Sacrilege of the Father is Oppression and Sacrilege in the Son, without a conscionable Restitution.

They therefore that would make an exact and impartial Search into their own Hearts, must look withal into their Deeds and Conveyances, and into the very Beams and Rafters of the House they dwell in, lest some secret Curse should cleave to their Inheritance, and the Worm of Conscience, whilst unheeded, should devour like a Canker. But, to be sure, all they who do not grosly deceive themselves in this serious Work of Self-Examination, will always discover ill Deserts enough of their own, (besides the Title they may have to those of their Predecessors) to make them sufficiently apprehensive of God's just Displeasure. From which, if

they

they would hope to find a ſure Refuge, they ought to humble themſelves under his mighty Hand, confeſſing and lamenting with great ſincerity as well as bitterneſs of Soul, their own Sins and the Sins of their Fore-fathers; deprecating God's Judgments, and imploring his Pardon no otherwiſe, than as they are ready to renounce and forſake both. This is what God expreſly requires of his People, *Levit.* 26. 40, 41, 42. threatning that otherwiſe they ſhould *pine away in their Iniquity, and in the Iniquities of their Fathers*; but promiſing upon their Confeſſion, Humiliation and accepting the Puniſhment of their Iniquity, that he would remember the Land and his Covenant with them.

And it is as reaſonable as it is requiſite, that they who have ſeen the Treſpaſſes of their Fathers *encreaſing over their own Heads, and growing up to the Heavens*, Ezr. 9. 6. ſhould in the moſt humble and ſolemn manner diſclaim all Partnerſhip in them, and expreſs their utter Deteſtation of them: Which when they neglect to do, the ſilent Covering of ſuch flagrant and notorious Wickedneſs, if it does not amount to a direct Approbation, yet it betrays at leaſt too ſlight a Senſe of it, and too much Indifference and Unconcernedneſs for the Honour of God's Holy Name.

For in truth it lyes upon all thoſe who are unhappily entangl'd with ſuch Relations, if they would demonſtrate their own Repentance to be more than Superficial, and deſire to have the Comfort of a clear Conſcience; it lyes upon them, I ſay, not only to deplore ſuch their Fathers Sins very heartily, and carefully to decline the fatal Example, but alſo to make ſome Reparation (as it were) to God as well as Men by a more abundant Zeal, eſpecially by ſhewing themſelves eminent Patterns of the contrary Virtues. For Inſtance, if the Father hath been a notable Extortioner or Oppreſſor, the Son, as conſcious that he inherits but the Spoils of Unrighteouſneſs, ſhould think himſelf oblig'd, not barely to make Reſtitution, but alſo to be rich in good Works, and to make the Hearts of the Poor rejoice, and purchaſe an Intereſt in their Prayers by his extraordinary Bounty and Liberality. If the Father hath been a Mover of Sedition or Schiſm, an Incendiary or a Rebel, the Son ſhould be the more zealous Promoter of Peace and Unity, and endeavour to give the more ſignal Proof of his Fidelity and Obedience, by ſacrificing his own Eaſe and Quiet, and (if need be) all his private Intereſts thereunto. And ſo in all other Caſes of ill-Example, if the Children would effectually redeem the Scandal, and avert the Curſe that will otherwiſe ſtick cloſe to them, they muſt not content themſelves with the Negative Character of being juſt Harmleſs, but they muſt aim to be diſtinguiſh'd by ſuch virtuous and worthy Deeds, as may be ſo much the more commendable in the Eſteem of good Men, and ſo much the better accepted in the ſight of God, the more oppoſite they are to the wicked Pranks of thoſe that went before them. So may they humbly hope, and ſo only hope with any Ground of Confidence, that God will *Repent and return and leave a Bleſſing behind him*, that they ſhall not *die in the Iniquity of their Fathers, but ſurely live.* Joel. 2. 14.

III. I am come now in the Third and Laſt Place to apply what hath been ſaid to our ſelves, and the mournful Occaſion of the preſent Aſſembly, by which, I am afraid, it will appear, that the Caſe of the Text is too plainly *Ours*: For (alas for Shame and Sorrow!) *Our Fathers have ſinned, and are not; and we have born their Iniquities.* That

That our Fathers have ſinn'd, and that moſt grievouſly, in the Matter of *Good King Charles*, no body can well be ignorant; no body can have the Front to deny, except they be ſuch as are nearly allied in Principle to the chief Actors in that bloody Tragedy; and, leſt they ſhould ſeem to be altogether unconcern'd themſelves, are reſolv'd not to diſmiſs them without a *Plaudite*. And if there be any ſuch ſhameleſs Defenders of ſo wicked a Cauſe, (as 'tis too notorious ſome there are) with all humble Submiſſion be it ſpoken, they deſerve another ſort of Caſtigation than what belongs to my Office. In the mean while certain it is, that Rebellion and Murder will and muſt be Sins, as long as the fifth and ſixth Commandments, the thirteenth Chapter to the *Romans*, and the ſecond of the firſt Epiſtle of St. *Peter*, make a part of Canonical Scripture. And I am ſtrongly inclin'd to think, that if that known Paſſage in the thirteenth to the *Romans* had been ſuffer'd to ſtand by it ſelf, unincumber'd with all ſtrange Gloſſes; and had it been only conſider'd, when and to whom the Injunction was given, and in what ſolemn manner, no Mortal could ever have dreamt that it ſhould infer any Licence, much leſs imploy an Obligation of reſiſting the Supreme Magiſtrate with Violence and Outrage, and perſecuting him even to the Death. One would think too, if that Text did ſtand in need of any Explanation, that the Univerſal Practice of the Primitive Chriſtians, the conſtant Judgment of the ancient Fathers, the expreſs Doctrine of our receiv'd Homilies, and the Conſent of all the beſt and moſt Learned Interpreters, ſhould be more likely to lead us into the true Meaning of it, than the perverſe Comments of a *Mariana* or a *Dolman*, or any other Paraſite of the Pope, or Aſſertor of his Exterminating Power over Princes.

But whatever Latitude of Interpretation that Place may be thought to admit or require, it can never be wide enough ſure to let in the *Great Rebellion*, and the *horrid Murther of King* Charles *the Firſt, of ever-bleſſed and glorious Memory*.

No! that Conſequence all good Men and good Subjects will ſtill be ready to diſavow; ſuch abominable Crimes will always be left deſtitute of all reaſonable Defence! They muſt however be held to be moſt inexcuſable both by the Laws of God and Man. For if we were to admit the darling Suppoſition, that Reſiſtance is the Subjects Privilege, always in reſerve againſt a time of Neceſſity; yet no one will pretend that it was deſign'd immediately to be put in Practice upon every the leaſt Deviation from the moſt uſual Courſe of Law and Juſtice: It is only ſuppos'd to be reſerv'd as the laſt Remedy for a deſperate Caſe, when nothing elſe can ſave the legal Conſtitution and the whole Community from Ruin But it cannot with any Colour of Truth be alledg'd, that things were brought to this Extremity when the Rebellion began; or indeed that there was the leaſt Attempt or Deſign on the King's part, to ſubvert the Fundamental Laws of the Nation, as was moſt injuriouſly laid to his Charge. It is true his Majeſty's preſſing Occaſions, and the Entanglement of his Affairs by the crafty Management of ſome *Demagogues* in the Senate-Houſe, had put his Miniſters upon the Invention and Uſe of an extraordinary Expedient or two for the ſupply of his Neceſſities; and ſuch, it may be, as were only founded upon ſome *Dormant Law*, to which the People had been long unwonted. And yet it ſhould be remember'd, that all the *Twelve Judges*,

Judges, when they were conſulted in the famous *Caſe of Ship-Money*, (againſt which there was ſo much Out-cry and Oppoſition) ſubſcrib'd their Opinions for its Legality; and when it came to be ſolemnly argu'd in the *Exchequer-Chamber*, Ten of the Twelve, for ought I can learn, ſtill perſiſted in the ſame Opinion. If it be ſaid that they were manifeſtly wrong and partial in this their Judgment, that indeed is more than I am able to gainſay: But then the more to blame they who were the ſworn Interpreters as well as Adminiſtrators of the Law, to preſs it againſt its true Intention into the Service of the Prerogative, or to warp it to the Will even of ſo Gracious a King, who would not knowingly have done the leaſt Wrong to the Meaneſt of his Subjects.

Vid. *Life of K. Charles I. Baker, Rushworth, Whitlock, Clarend.*

They who thus miſguided the King in a Point of Law, were juſtly anſwerable for the Miſapplication of it: But why ſhould the good King pay for it at the Price of his Crown and Dignity? Why ſhould the whole Kingdom be ſet in a Flame, that he might be ſure to ſee his Error? Why ſhould the well-meaning, the good-natur'd People of *England* be ſpirited up into a Rebellion, and involv'd in Blood, for the pretended Recovery of Rights, which they were in quiet and full Poſſeſſion of before?

Clarendon's Hiſt. l. 3. p. 206, 221.

For, to cut off all Apology from the wicked Incendiaries of that time, it is obſervable, that before the War commenced, every diſputed Right was given up, every Grievance, real or Imaginary, heal'd, by new Laws fram'd for that purpoſe; all which his Majeſty moſt cheerfully conſented to, out of his Fatherly Love and Tenderneſs to his People, and with hopes too of engaging their Affections, at leaſt of Silencing all their Murmurs and Complaints for ever. So that in Effect the Pretext of Male-Adminiſtration was wholly remov'd, before they came to carve out their own Remedy by the Sword: And yet, had it been otherwiſe, the Sword was no lawful Weapon for Subjects to weild againſt their King. For tho' the Regal Power is limited by Law, and the Peoples Right ſecur'd to them by Law, yet it can never be imagin'd, that there ſhould be any Law to warrant Rebellion and Regicide: So far from it, that as is declar'd in the Act that appoints the Obſervation of this Day, *By the undoubted and Fundamental Laws of this Kingdom, neither the Peers of this Realm nor the Commons, nor both together in Parliament or out of Parliament, nor the People collectively or repreſentatively, nor any other Perſons whatſoever, ever had, have, hath or ought to have any Coercive Power over the Perſons of the Kings of this Realm.* Stat. 12. *Car.* 2. Ch. 30. 7. And this Declaration did not then firſt obtain the force of Law, when that Act was paſs'd, but *it is Declarative of our Original Conſtitution*, as a Learned Perſon well ſuggeſted, in this Honourable Preſence, upon the laſt Return of this Anniverſary. And this, even they who ſounded the Alarm from the Pulpit to the Field, were ſenſible of at laſt, they who were for drawing the Sword, (pardon but the Inconſiſtency) were againſt lifting up the Axe; *and held themſelves bound* (they tell us) *in Duty to God, Religion, the King, Parliament and Kingdom, to profeſs before God, Angels and Men, that they verily believ'd the taking away the Life of the King, in the way of Trial, to be contrary to the Word of God, the Principles of the Proteſtant (never then ſtain'd with the leaſt drop of Blood of a King) and the Fundamental Conſtitution of this Kingdom.*

Dr. Kennet's Sermon before the Commons, Jan. 30. 1705.

Vid. the Vindication of the Miniſters of the Goſpel in and about *London*, printed 1648.

And

And the Truth is, that *Party of wretched, and desperately wicked Men,* (as the Act aforecited justly stigmatizes them) *who had plotted and contriv'd the Ruin of our excellent Monarchy and Religion, found it necessary, in order to carry on their pernicious and traiterous Designs, to throw down all the Bulwarks and Fences of Law, and to subvert the very Being and Constitution of Parliament, that so they might make their Way open to any further Attempts upon the Sacred Person of his Majesty himself.* And yet, after they had levey'd actual War against him, and prosecuted him (and all his Loyal Adherents) with all manner of illegal and outragious Violence; after they had driven him out of the Field, and hunted him from one Corner of the Kingdom to another, 'till at last they got him into their Net; I say, after all these Insults and Exorbitancies they still thought it expedient to add the Mockery of Justice to the Cruelty of Malice, that they might destroy him, with greater Pomp and less Pity, as the King express'd himself, when he saw they were about to finish their long-intended Treason: *And to this Purpose,* as the Act of Parliament sets forth, *They prepar'd an Ordinance* (the Engine by which they overturn'd all Law) *for erecting a prodigious and unheard of Tribunal, which they call'd an High-Court of Justice for Trial of his Majesty.* And before this Mock-Court (consisting of the very Refuse of a House of Commons, tho' acting in the Name of the whole Commons of *England*) he was arraign'd, condemn'd, and sentenc'd as a *Tyrant, Traitor, Murderer, and publick Enemy, to be put to Death by severing his Head from his Body.* Thus a Sovereign Prince, in whom the whole Executive Power is lodg'd by the known Laws of this Land, and from whom the Administration of Justice takes its Rise and Force, was sentenc'd to die the Death of the greatest Malefactor by his own Rebellious Subjects: And accordingly, he was executed (as some love to call it) in the Face of the Sun, upon a Scaffold built up against the Walls of his own Palace, that no Indignity might be wanting to vex his Righteous Soul, and add to the Sting of his Misfortunes. And so fell the Pious King, ignominiously and scandalously, if the Sentence of his Judges had any Truth or Weight in it; but, in a true Christian Account, gloriously and even triumphantly. For 'tis a Glory for a Christian to suffer the worst Extremities in the best of Causes: 'Tis the noblest Triumph for a Christian King, to preserve a good Conscience with the Loss of his Crown and Life; and, at his dying Hour, with an invincible Patience and Meekness, humbly copy'd from the Cross of Christ, to forgive and pray (as did the Martyr of the Day) for his unrelenting Murderers. And by this time, tho' you wanted not to be convinc'd of it, you cannot but see and stand amaz'd at the monstrous Size of that Wickedness, which we are this Day met to confess and lament. For certainly, if all that Ravage and Bloodshed, that Prophanation and Sacrilege, which were the Concomitants of a most ungodly War, be Sins; if the lawless Usurpation, that follow'd, upon the Liberties, Estates and Lives (nay and the very Souls too) of Fellow-Citizens and Fellow-Subjects be Sins; in one Word, if the most unnatural Rebellion that ever was heard of, and the barbarous Murder of a most Excellent Prince, who had all the Bowels and Tenderness of a Parent towards his People, be Sins, then have our Fathers sinned; and sinned perhaps beyond all Example of former Ages, and 'tis hoped, beyond the Imitation of all Posterity.

* Εἰκὼν Βασιλικὴ. *Cap.* 28.

Stat. Book.

And

And as our Fathers were *verily guilty* concerning the common Father of our Country, ſo we that come after them have long groan'd under the Burden of their Iniquities, and ſuffer'd deeply on that very Score. And we have ſuffer'd in ſuch a manner, that we may perceive our Puniſhment (which for the moſt part alſo is our Sin) to bear a manifeſt Relation to the Iniquities of our Fathers, and to be as it were the natural Fruit of the old Stock. For has it been our Misfortune, ſince that time, to live under Princes, who were in the Intereſts of Popery, or of that Perſuaſion, and from we both fear'd and felt the Attempts of Popery upon our Conſtitution? Thanks to thoſe furious Zealots for this, who, under pretence of purer Reformation, once demoliſh'd this Proteſtant Church, that is the chief Bulwark againſt Popery, and murder'd a moſt Religious Proteſtant Prince, and drove his Sons into Baniſhment. And it was Their very great Misfortune, as well as ours, that they ſhould be thus expos'd abroad, in their green and unexperienc'd Years, when they were leaſt able to reſiſt the Impreſſions of an inſinuating Mother, and moſt apt to take a Tincture from the Vices or the Religion of a Foreign Court, that then gave them Harbour. But, I ſay, the Thanks are entirely due to thoſe, who depriv'd them of the beſt of Fathers, and his virtuous Example and good Inſtructions; and forc'd them to ſeek their Refuge where they met with a Snare, and to take part of their Education where all poſſible Art and Induſtry was us'd to pervert them. Is there now-a-days Reaſon to complain (as ſure enough there is) of a viſible Decay of true Piety, amidſt a great Diverſity of Opinions in Religion, and Modes of Religious Worſhip? This too is owing in great meaſure to thoſe Bleſſed Times, when there was no King in *Iſrael*, no Unity, no Order in our *Jeruſalem*; when Enthuſiaſm had almoſt juſtled out all ſober Religion and good Morality, and brought the Ordinances of God into Neglect, if not Contempt; and the Catechizing of Youth, which is the beſt means of ſeaſoning them with an early and true Senſe of Religion, into Diſuſe: During which unhappy Interval, the wild Tares of Schiſm and Hereſie grew up ſo faſt, and were ſo deep rooted in the Minds of a deluded People, that the Soil could never ſince be clear'd of them. Again, is there a Spirit of Infidelity and Atheiſm ſprung up to ſome height, and daily ſpreading among us? Is it become almoſt a Faſhion to entertain Doubts concerning the Truth of all Religion, and to treat the Name of it, and its Miniſtrations too, with as much Levity and Scorn, as if it were diſcover'd to be all a ridiculous Cheat? For This alſo we are principally indebted to Thoſe Pious Times, when Religion was made the Watch-word to Rebellion, and a Warrant for Sacrilege and Murders. And what wonder, if the Hypocriſie of thoſe Days, which was but Irreligion in Diſguiſe, hath, in a leſs demure Age, ventur'd to pluck off the Maſk, and appear like it ſelf, even no better than bare fac'd Prophaneneſs?

But, I forbear to multiply even juſt Complaints. What I have ſaid is ſufficient, I hope, to ſhew, what kind of Fruit it is that ſets our Teeth ſo much on edge: And it may give us too much Reaſon to apprehend, that we have not yet *drunk off all the Dregs of the Cup of God's Fury*. Sure I am, that the vaſt Load of Guilt, which hath been continually encreaſing upon us from the firſt Date of this Black Day and upwards, is enough to ſink any Nation, without a deep, unfeigned, and effectual Repentance. For

alas! where or when shall we find the genuine Tokens of such a Repentance, as is in any Degree proportion'd to the Greatness of our Crimes? For the Murder of the King can be reputed for no less, than a National Sin; partly in regard of the great Numbers that were confederated against him, and the many more that were accessary to the Beginnings of Mischief, who started back at the Progress, and were struck with Astonishment and Horrour at the Conclusion of it; and partly, because it was brought about at last, under as much Pretence of Law, and with as much Face of Authority, as the Tyrannical Powers, then uppermost, could give to it. And therefore the Representatives of the Nation, as soon as Things were reduc'd, by a most surprizing Providence, into their ancient Order, judg'd it to require a most solemn and general Repentance. To which End, *As a lasting Monument of their otherwise inexpressible Detestation and Abhorrency of the villanous and abominable Fact,* Stat. 12. Car. 2. ch. 30. They, in their great Wisdom, took care to have it enacted, that This might *for ever be set apart and kept as an Anniversary Day of Fasting and Humiliation, to implore the Mercy of God, that neither the Guilt of that Sacred and Innocent Blood, nor those other Sins by which God was provok'd to deliver up both them and their King into the Hands of cruel and unreasonable Men, might at any time hereafter be visited upon them or their Posterity.* Such was the pious Intent of our Law-givers: And oh! that it had, or even yet might have, its due Influence upon our Hearts and Lives. But, I am sorry to say it, there has been so little Aversion shewn to any of those Sins, that might possibly help to bring the Curse of this Day upon our Heads, that we have added greatly to the Heap. And even the Restoration it self, that wonderful and unexpected Mercy, was but ill entertain'd at first, by an Indulgence in all manner of Excesses and Immoralities, together with loose Principles, taken up on purpose to cheat the Conscience or keep it easie; both which, I fear, are still retain'd amongst us, with wicked Additions and Improvements.

And I am exceedingly afraid, if the Matter were narrowly look'd into, that the very Crime of this Day is not so generally, so thoroughly repented of, as it ought to be. If it be, how comes it to pass, that the very same Maxims and Doctrines, that brought the King from the Prison to the Block, are so publickly avow'd, and industriously propagated? And what can be the meaning of that Barbarous Feast, that is said (nor can it be gainsaid) to be annually kept up, to mock the sad Solemnize of the Day, and in the Execrable Deed? What should it mean too, that even under the Shelter of the highest Authority, we cannot be permitted to Solemnize the Day in Confessions and Deprecations, and other the sober Expressions of a just Detestation of the Fact, without being indecently ridicul'd, and scandalously traduc'd by licentious Tongues and Pens? And what means it at last, that there is so much earnest wishing and urging to have the Day abolish'd? And why abolish'd, I beseech you? Why? Because it only serves to keep up odious Names and Marks of Distinction, and to perpetuate Heats and Animosities. And, 'tis true, Rebellion and Murder are odious Names; but then they are Horrid Crimes too, that ought to be mark'd and distinguish'd, to the end the People may be sufficiently warn'd against them: And if any can find in their Hearts to conceive or retain any Anger or Animosity against us, for calling (as we usually do upon this Day) Fighting against

F I N I S.